

Benefits and Services

Cash Assistance

Refugees are eligible to apply for the same assistance programs as U.S. citizens, including the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) Program, Food Stamps, Medi-Cal, Supplemental Security Income/State Supplementary Payment Program, and General Relief.

Single refugee adults or couples who are not eligible for other welfare assistance may be eligible to receive Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) for their first eight months in the U.S. Eligibility for RCA primarily parallels that of the CalWORKs Program.

All 58 counties must provide RCA benefits to refugees that apply for and are eligible to receive RCA and are not eligible for any other cash assistance. The RCA Program and related administrative costs are 100 percent federally-funded under the RRP.

Employment Services

Refugees who have been in the U.S. for five years or less are eligible to participate in employment services designed to help them become employed within one year or to retain employment after finding a job. These services are provided through the Refugee Social Services (RSS) and/or Targeted Assistance (TA) Programs.

Unaccompanied Refugee Minor (URM) Program

The URM Program provides foster care services for refugee children who have come to the U.S. without parents or a close relative to care for them. The RPB, in coordination with Catholic Charities of San Jose, and Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service in Southern California operates the URM Program in California.

Funding

Funding for refugee services is 100 percent federal and has the following components: Cash and Medical Administration (CMA), Formula RSS, Formula TA, Older Refugee Discretionary and the Refugee School Impact Grant.

CMA Funding

CMA funding is provided to the state for reimbursement of costs associated with administering the RCA and the URM programs. The CDSS reimburses all counties' costs for administering the RCA program.

Formula RSS Funding

Formula RSS funding is awarded to the state by the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) based on refugee arrivals during the most recent three federal fiscal years (FFYs). CDSS then allocates the Formula RSS funding to eligible counties. The eligible counties that receive Formula RSS funds for FFY 2008/09 are Alameda, Fresno, Los Angeles, Merced, Orange, Sacramento, San Diego*, San Francisco, San Joaquin, and Santa Clara.

Funding is allocated to these counties based on the number of refugees currently receiving cash assistance in each county. For FFY 2008/09, California was awarded \$10,074,282.

*A voluntary agency in San Diego County receives Formula RSS funds directly from ORR to operate an alternative program to assist refugees.

Formula TA Funding

Formula TA funding is awarded to the state for specific counties with large refugee populations and high refugee concentrations to facilitate employment and self sufficiency. The counties are determined by ORR once every three years. ORR uses a formula that takes into consideration both the number of refugee arrivals during the most recent five FFYs and the percentage that refugee arrivals represent to the overall county's population to identify eligible counties.

There are five California counties currently eligible to receive Formula TA funding: Fresno, Los Angeles, Sacramento, San Diego, and Santa Clara. The CDSS allocates funding to these counties based on the amounts determined by ORR. For FFY 2008/09, California was awarded \$3,892,227.

Older Refugee Discretionary Funding

Older Refugee Discretionary funding is awarded through a competitive application process for a five-year period, with subsequent years awarded on a non-competitive continuation basis.

Nine counties participate in this grant: Alameda, Fresno, Los Angeles, Merced, Orange, Sacramento, San Diego, San Francisco, and Santa Clara. Projects provide outreach to the state's older refugee population to link them with mainstream programs for the elderly and provide assistance with the citizenship process.

Funding is allocated to participating counties based on the number of older refugees currently receiving cash assistance in each county. In FFY 2008/09, California competed for and was awarded \$263,125.

Refugee School Impact Grant

The Refugee School Impact Grant is awarded through a competitive application process and is potentially eligible for a total of five years with the second through fifth year awards on a non-competitive continuation basis.

This grant promotes coordination among the refugee county coordinators, local school districts and community-based organizations to better serve refugee children in their communities. In coordination with the California Department of Education (CDE), funding is provided to local school districts through a Request for Proposal process in five counties designated by ORR: Alameda, Fresno, Los Angeles, Sacramento, and Santa Clara. For FFY 2008/09, California was awarded continuation funding in the amount of \$1.7 million.

Collaborative Partners

Successful refugee resettlement is a collaborative effort requiring the cooperation and coordination of a number of agencies both within and outside of state government. The following is a list of the agencies that the RPB collaborates with to coordinate services.

County Welfare Departments (CWDs)

California's welfare programs are supervised by the CDSS and administered in the 58 counties by the CWDs. These agencies accept applications for cash assistance, determine eligibility and need, deliver benefits and services, and make referrals to other agencies and providers when appropriate. The CWDs may also provide services to refugees directly or through subcontracts in counties eligible to receive RSS and TA.

Employment Services Providers

Providers of refugee employment services are selected by the counties through a competitive bid process. Many non-profit agencies, including refugee community-based organizations, have been formed specifically for the purpose of aiding refugee resettlement by providing linguistically and culturally appropriate services.

Voluntary Agencies (VOLAGs)

Resettlement services by the VOLAGs include core services provided within the first 90 days of arrival in the U.S. These services include reception and placement services; counseling and referral services in the areas of orientation, health, employment, and coordination with local services; and assistance to children separated from parents. Each VOLAG

provides a variety of optional services beyond these core services as the individual agency's ability permits.

Private Foundations

A number of philanthropic foundations in California play an active role in refugee resettlement. They fund agencies to provide services and to perform functions for refugees that are not funded with public resources.

Advisory Groups

Many advisory groups currently in existence are directly involved in refugee issues. Refugee resettlement is the primary concern for these groups. They are: State Advisory Council on Refugee Assistance and Services, Local Forums on Refugee Affairs, and Joint Voluntary Agencies Committee of California.

State Agencies

The CDSS works with a number of State agencies to coordinate services for refugees. A description of these agencies and their responsibilities are listed below:

The California Department of Health Care Services administers the Medi-Cal Program, pursuant to the California State Plan for Medical Assistance and Title XIX of the Social Security Act. Refugee Medical Assistance\Entrant Medical Assistance is administered in conformity with the State Plan for Medical Assistance, with certain exceptions required by the Refugee Act of 1980.

The California Department of Public Health administers the Refugee Health Assessment Program, which funds refugee-impacted local health jurisdictions to provide comprehensive refugee health assessments.

The California Department of Aging provides information on services and resources for elderly refugees, which the CDSS disseminates to interested organizations and local governments through its website.

The CDSS provides the California Department of Mental Health (CDMH) with information on newly arriving refugee populations and their unique needs, such as language and cultural barriers to services. The CDSS and the CDMH coordinate to increase the access to mental health services by refugees.

The CDE provides a wide variety of educational services, including traditional kindergarten through twelfth grade, adult education, English-as-a-Second Language instruction, and vocational education. Since FFY 2005/06, the CDSS has partnered with the CDE on the Refugee School Impact Grant.